



News Release

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New Chickenpox Vaccine Requirement for High School Students this Fall

OLYMPIA -- Parents of Washington high schoolers may be surprised to hear about a new chickenpox (varicella) vaccine requirement in the coming school year. In the 2016-17 school year, all public and private high school students will be required to get two doses of the chickenpox vaccine before they enter school.

Parents are encouraged to get their teens vaccinated soon to avoid a last minute rush before the start of school.

People may consider chickenpox a routine and mild childhood illness; however, it is a very contagious disease that spreads quickly and causes an itchy rash, fever, and sometimes serious illness. People infected with chickenpox are at risk for developing shingles, a painful skin rash, later in life. Chickenpox is transmitted through the air by coughing and sneezing or by touching chickenpox blisters.

“Chickenpox is a preventable disease that can be particularly dangerous for kids with weakened immune systems. If all students are up-to-date with two doses of the chickenpox vaccine, they can start the school year protected,” says State Health Officer Dr. Kathy Lofy.

Students are not required to be vaccinated if they already had two doses of the vaccine, have had chickenpox in the past, or have had a blood test showing they are immune.

Parents can make sure all their students are ready to enter school by making appointments with their healthcare provider now. If a student needs two doses of the chickenpox vaccine, they need to wait one month between each dose.

“Parents can be prepared ahead of time by getting their children up-to-date on the new chickenpox vaccine requirements and all other required vaccines now,” said Lofy.

The Department of Health, local health departments, and schools are working together to make sure all students, especially high schoolers, are up-to-date with current vaccine requirements before school starts in the fall.

Information and frequently asked questions about the new chickenpox vaccine requirements are available on [DOH's website](#). Parents can also learn more about [all vaccine requirements for the 2016-17 school year](#).

Parents can receive no-cost vaccines for all kids up to 19-years-old through health care providers participating in the state's [Childhood Vaccine Program](#). Participating providers may charge for the office visit and an administration fee to give the vaccine. People who can't afford the administration fee can ask for it to be waived.

For help finding a health care provider or an immunization clinic, call your [local health agency](#) or the [WithinReach](#) Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588.

The [Department of Health website](#) is your source for a healthy dose of information. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).